

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS IN FEBRUARY 2002

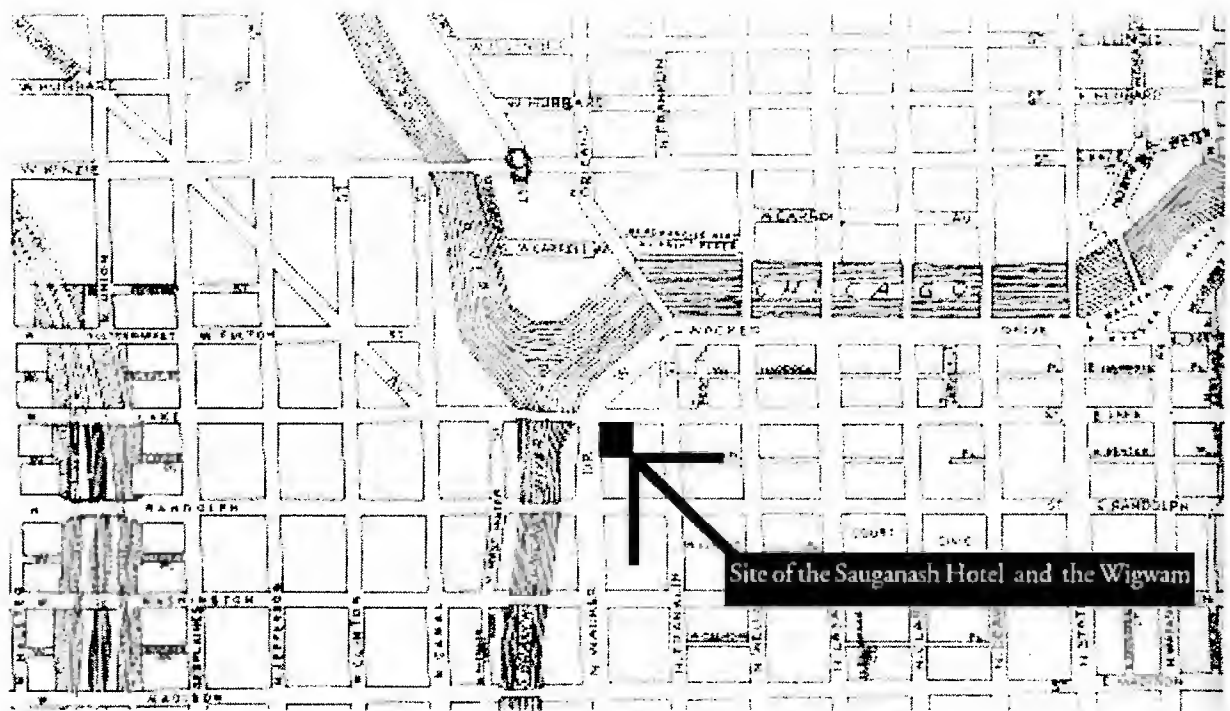
SITE OF THE SAUGANASH HOTEL AND THE WIGWAM

SOUTHEAST CORNER OF LAKE STREET AND WACKER DRIVE

**BUILT: SAUGANASH HOTEL: 1831 (DESTROYED 1851)
WIGWAM: 1860 (DESTROYED CA. 1867)**

The site of the Sauganash Hotel and the Wigwam is significant in the early history of Chicago. The Sauganash Hotel was one of the first buildings constructed in the frontier settlement of Chicago that began near the forks of the Chicago River, and it played an important role in the City's rise to dominance on the American frontier in the 1800s. Constructed in 1831 as a gathering spot for soldiers from Fort Dearborn, area settlers, and travelers, the Sauganash Hotel was the location of Chicago's first village board election in 1833. During a brief period in 1837 when the building was not in operation as a hotel, it served as Chicago's first theater. The Sauganash Hotel remained in almost continuous operation until it burned down in 1851.

Nine years later, a large two-story wood-plank building was erected on the same spot to house the Republican National Convention of 1860, the first national political convention hosted by Chicago. It was in this building, called the "Wigwam," that Abraham Lincoln was nominated by the newly-formed Republican Party for President of the United States. His election set in motion a series of dramatic events surrounding the expansion of slavery and the secession of several southern states, ultimately culminating in the Civil War. After the election in 1860, the Wigwam was used for other purposes until it was likely destroyed by a fire in 1867.



Top: The Site of the Sauganash Hotel and Wigwam is located on the southeast corner of Lake Street and Wacker Drive in downtown Chicago.

Above: Chicago in 1833, looking west toward the "Forks" of the Chicago River, where the North and South Branches of the river meet. Wolf Point is on the upper right.

THE SAUGANASH HOTEL

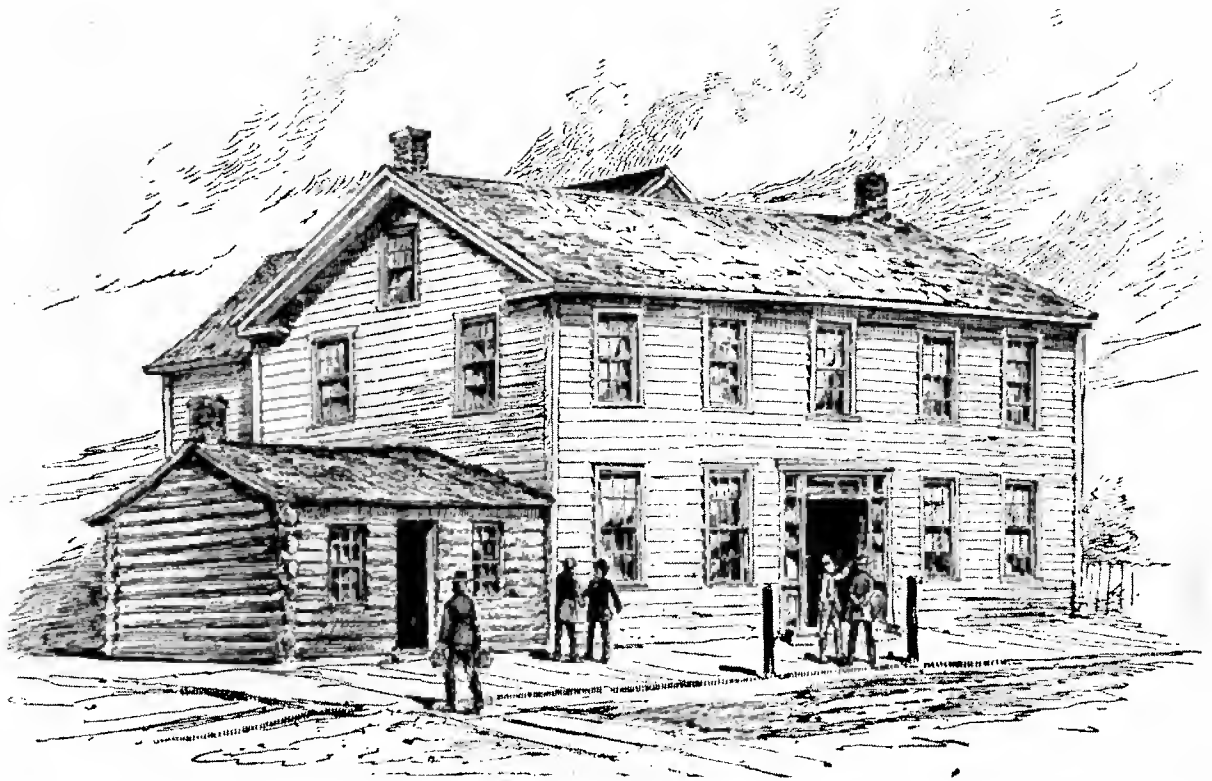
Chicago in 1826 was a sparsely populated area, with a few cabins concentrated around Fort Dearborn near the mouth of the Chicago River. Some settlers lived in Fort Dearborn itself, which at that time was not garrisoned and occasionally furnished shelter to members of fur trading expeditions from Canada. Probably fewer than 20 cabins occupied the site near what was called "The Forks," three-quarters of a mile to the west of the Fort, where the north and south branches of the river merged. In all, "a black and dreary expanse of prairie with occasional patches of timber" was the way one settler remembered the Fort Dearborn settlement in 1826.

Chicago, however, was primed for growth. The opening of the Erie Canal the previous fall created a new avenue of migration and trade between Chicago and the more settled East. Mark Beaubien (1800-1881), younger brother of Jean Baptiste Beaubien, one of the first settlers in the area, arrived in Chicago in 1826. Mark and his wife, Monique Nadeau (1800-1847), bought from James Kinzie a small log cabin located on the east bank of the South Branch of the Chicago River, south of where it flowed into the main channel.

By 1829 Beaubien began to take in guests, calling his house the "Eagle Exchange Tavern," thereby establishing the first public house on the south side of the river. A visitor at that time writes that "Mark's loft, capable of storing half a hundred men, for a night, if closely packed, was often filled to repletion. The furniture equipment, however, for a caravansary so well patronized, it is said, was exceedingly scant; that circumstance, however, only served to exhibit more clearly the eminent skill of the landlord."

That same year the Illinois legislature ordered a survey of the area in order to lay out the town and sell lots to support the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The sale of the canal lots, the improvement of the harbor, the erection of warehouses, and the platting of the town changed the center of activity from the north to the south side of the main branch of the Chicago River, and Beaubien's tavern became the focal point of that activity.

When Chicago's first plat was filed on August 4, 1830, with streets laid out in a grid pattern, Beaubien discovered that his cabin site was in the middle of Lake Street and he moved it a short distance to the southeast corner of Market (present-day Wacker Drive) and Lake streets. When lots went on sale in September 1830, Beaubien bought Lots 3 and 4 of Block 31 for \$42 and \$60, respectively. In 1831 he built a two-story frame addition to his cabin and renamed it the "Sauganash Hotel." An 1884 engraving shows a large symmetrical two-story building with a pitched roof attached to a one-story log cabin. At the time, Mrs. John H. Kinzie, an early settler, described the hotel as "a pretentious white two-story building, with bright blue wooden shutters, the admiration of all the little circle at Wolf Point," referring to the settlers on the north side of the river.



Top: The Sauganash Hotel was built in 1831 as one of several taverns located in the new settlement. It was the location for Chicago's first village board election.

Above left: The original 1830 plat of Chicago with the site of the Sauganash Hotel marked by a black square.

Above right: Mark Beaubien (1800-1881), owner of the Sauganash Hotel, one of Chicago's earliest public houses and the site of the City's first election.

The Sauganash Hotel was the social center of town. According to the early Chicago historian A. T. Andreas, writing in 1884, Beaubien was widely known as a “jolly” host, who “after having given his guests the best his larder afforded . . . would of evenings tune up his violin . . . and often, till late at night, amuse and entertain them with his melody. Dancing, too, generally formed no small feature of these sports; and so Sauganash became popular through the character of its proprietor as a musician as well as for its excellence as a hotel.” Other visitors, it should be noted, spoke of the Sauganash Hotel’s noise, dirt, miserably overcrowded conditions, and unappetizing food.

The hotel was named for the Potawatomi chief Sauganash, also known as Billy Caldwell. Born about 1780, Caldwell was the son of a Mohawk mother and Captain William Caldwell, an Irish officer of the British Indian Department at Detroit, Michigan, and Amherstberg, Ontario. Educated by the Jesuits in Canada, Billy Caldwell served as an aide to Tecumseh in the War of 1812. It was his affiliation with the British that earned Caldwell the sobriquet “Sauganash” (translated as “English-speaking Canadian”), although American authorities sponsored Caldwell to serve as a Potawatomi chief. It was Sauganash who, under an 1832 treaty with the Potawatomi, helped the United States acquire a large area of land south of Chicago, between Lake Michigan and the Illinois River. In 1841 he died at Council Bluffs, Iowa, where the Potawatomi had been relocated after the Treaty of 1833.

By 1833 Chicago had evolved, according to one writer at the time, from “an Indian wigwam town” into an “American city.” On August 10 of that year, the first village board was elected, consisting of the following five trustees: T. J. V. Owen, George W. Dole, Madore B. Beaubien (Mark Beaubien’s nephew), John Miller, and E. S. Kimberly. Two days later the Board of Trustees met for the first time in the Sauganash Hotel to organize the town government.

Although no record book exists, the original proceedings of that first meeting were transcribed upon a large sheet of paper by R. J. Hamilton, the Clerk *pro tem*. The board, Andreas reports, was “endowed with the usual powers—to abate nuisances, gambling, disorderly conduct; to prevent fast driving and enforce police regulations; to license shows, control markets, take charge of the streets and sidewalks, and to provide the means for protecting the town against fire.” Further, “it was ordered by the Board that meetings should be held at the house of Mark Beaubien, on the first Wednesday in each month, at seven o’clock p.m., beginning with Wednesday, September 4, 1833.” The board held its monthly meetings at the Sauganash until the fall of 1835, when a new one-story (with basement) brick courthouse was built on Clark and Randolph streets.

The construction of the new City Hall was representative of the growth of Chicago from 1833 to 1835. John Calhoun writes in an 1834 editorial in the *Chicago Democrat*, “The Spring of 1833 may be marked as a new era in the history of Chicago. . . . At that time Chicago did not contain more than five or six regular stores, and now may be counted from twenty to twenty-five; then it did not contain over one hundred and fifty inhabitants, whereas now there are from eight to ten hundred; then it did not contain more than thirty

buildings, now may be seen over one hundred and eighty.”

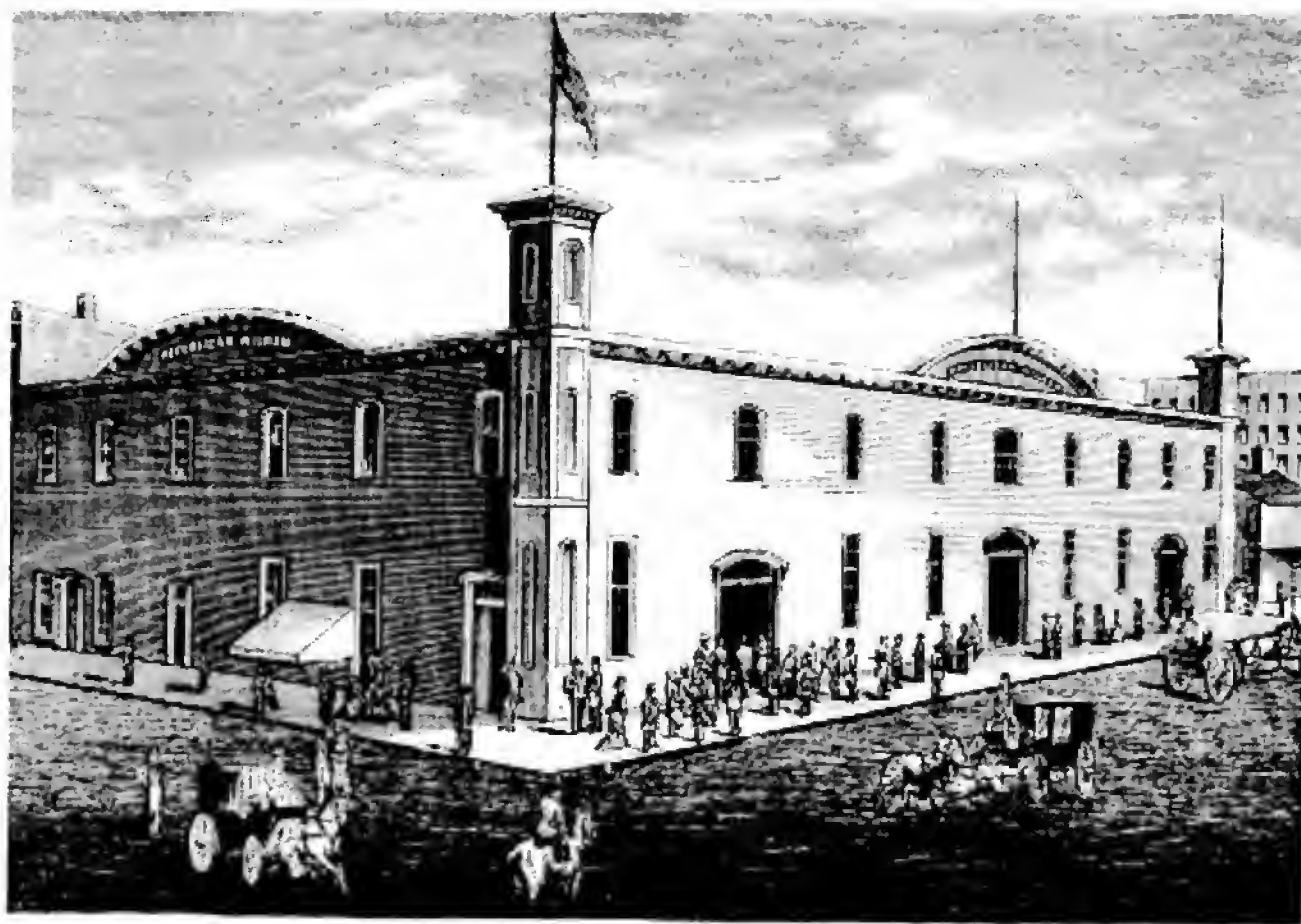
This growth prompted Beaubien to build a second hotel in 1834, the “Exchange Coffee House” at the northwest corner of Lake and Wells streets, while selling the Sauganash Hotel to John Murphy. In 1840, Beaubien and his family moved to Lisle, Illinois, where he acquired farmland from William Sweet and also bought a cabin where he subsequently established another tavern. Later, during 1859 and 1860 he was the lighthouse keeper in Chicago. Beaubien died on April 11, 1881, and was buried with his second wife in St. Rose Cemetery in Kankakee, Illinois. His fiddle is preserved at the Chicago Historical Society. He had two wives and fathered approximately 22 children, thereby, quoting Ulrich Danckers and Jane Meredith in *Early Chicago*, “vitally contributing to the population explosion of early Chicago.”

John Murphy, who renamed the Sauganash the “United States Hotel,” operated it until his new United States Hotel on the west side of the Chicago River was completed. In 1837, the year Chicago was chartered as a city, the Sauganash was operated as a theater by Harry Isherwood and his partner Alexander MacKenzie. Reports disagree on which play was actually first to be produced—either “The Idiot Witness” by John Thomas Haines or “The Hunchback” by J. S. Knowles—but the city’s first dramatic performance occurred on October 17, 1837, in what had been the dining room at the Sauganash Hotel. In 1839, the building once again became a hotel, which it remained until it was destroyed by fire on March 4, 1851.

THE WIGWAM

Nine years after the Sauganash Hotel went up in flames, a large building was erected on the same spot to house the Republican National Convention of 1860. The hall was constructed in five weeks specifically for the convention at a cost of between \$5,000 and \$6,000. Chicago business leaders not only underwrote the cost of the building, but were also instrumental in bringing the convention to the young city. As part of their ultimate plan to gain local favorite Abraham Lincoln the party’s nomination for the presidency, *Chicago Press and Tribune* editor Joseph Medill and local railroad attorney Norman Judd convinced party leaders in New York City to choose Chicago. Easterners—eager to gain the support of western states and to visit the country’s biggest boom town—quickly agreed.

The new convention hall was called the “Wigwam,” an Algonquin word for a dwelling made of bent tree poles overlaid with bark, but generally used to refer to any temporary shelter. Later the name “Wigwam” was used to refer to the meeting hall of the Tammany Society of New York, which emulated the Iroquois federation’s political structure. According to R. Craig Sautter and Alderman Edward M. Burke in *Inside the Wigwam*, “If the Tammany tradition didn’t exactly travel with settlers of the open prairie, of which Chicago was the great commercial gateway, at least the notion of the wigwam did.”



WIGWAM BUILDING

On the site that previously held the Sauganash Hotel, the Wigwam was built in 1860 to house that year's Republican National Convention, the first of 25 national political conventions hosted by Chicago.

Chicago's Wigwam was 100 feet by 180 feet, with the longest section along Market Street (Wacker Drive). It was two stories high and built to take advantage of the site's natural slope, so that there was a "perfect view of the speaker's stand" from all three sides. The hall could accommodate 10,000 people, with approximately 700 on its stage. On either side of the stage were committee rooms, and in front of the platform was an enclosed place for musicians to play. The three interior wooden walls were left rough and unplanned; the wall back of the platform was the brick wall of the adjoining store. Sautter and Burke describe the building as a "barn-like edifice," with "long rows of arched entrances nearly twenty-feet high and even loftier rectangular windows designed to allow air circulation" for the delegates and supporters within.

The architect of the Wigwam was W. W. Boyington, an early Chicago architect who later designed the Water Tower. Lit by gaslight at night and decorated by wreaths of evergreens and the states' coats of arms, the building was, in the eyes of local Republicans, "one of the finest architectural feats in town" and perhaps "the best political hall in the nation" (Sautter and Burke). The Wigwam was dedicated on May 12, 1860, the *Chicago Press and Tribune* boasting that, "altogether the Wigwam is a success in design, and in its carrying out."

The 1860 Republican Convention was important for many reasons. It was the first national political convention that Chicago had ever hosted (the city has hosted twenty-four more, as of this writing). It was the first to have a special building erected for its use, the first to bring telegraph wires and instruments into the building itself, and the first to admit the general public in large numbers. The spectators, outnumbering convention delegates five or six to one, consisted almost entirely of ardent supporters of the leading candidates who were there to cheer on signal and to keep on cheering as long as possible when required to do so. In fact, according to Joseph Bucklin Bishop in *Our Political Drama*, the modern practice of cheering and counter cheering in tests of noise and endurance began at this pivotal 1860 convention.

The 1860 Republican Convention also marked the growing strength of the new Republican Party, barely six years old at the time. It was born out of the sectional conflicts regarding the expansion of slavery into the new Western territories as embodied by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. This act, which repealed earlier compromises that had excluded slavery from the territories, was introduced by the U. S. Senator from Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas, a moderate Democrat, advocated "popular sovereignty," the doctrine under which the status of slavery in the territories was to be determined by the settlers themselves. "Anti-Nebraska" protest meetings were attended by abolitionists, Democrats, and Whigs. They decided to call themselves Republicans, evoking Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican party.

The new party was a success from the beginning. The 1854 congressional elections saw 44 Republicans elected as a part of the anti-Nebraskan majority in the House of Representatives and several Republicans were elected to the Senate and to various state houses.

In 1856 at the first Republican national convention, Senator John C. Fremont was nominated for the presidency, but was defeated by Democrat James Buchanan. During that campaign, the northern wing of the nativist Know-Nothing Party (so-called because they answered questions from outsiders about their party and its actions by saying, "I know nothing") split off and endorsed the Republican ticket, making the Republicans the principal anti-slavery party in the 1856 election.

In the 1857 Dred Scott decision, the Supreme Court ruled that slaves were property, not citizens with rights. The decision polarized Northerners and Southerners and served as an eye-opener to those Northerners who believed that slavery was tolerable as long as it stayed in the South. Suddenly, many Northerners who had not previously been against the South and against slavery began to realize that if they did not stop the spread of slavery now, they might never again have the chance.

The Scott decision prompted a series of debates during the 1858 Illinois U. S. Senate race between the relatively unknown Abraham Lincoln and the incumbent Senator Stephen A. Douglas. In contrast to Douglas' popular sovereignty stance, Lincoln, a "free soiler," argued that the nation could not survive as half-slave and half-free. Although Douglas was reelected to the Senate by the Democratic state legislature, Lincoln became a national name for the first time.

Despite this, at the time of the 1860 convention, few outside of Chicago considered Abraham Lincoln a major contender for the Republican presidential nomination. Most Republicans supported Senator William Henry Seward from New York, who was considered unbeatable. Other Republican candidates that year were Edward Bates of Missouri, Senator Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, and Salmon Portland Chase of Ohio. In the tradition of the time, none of the candidates came to the convention themselves, although they stayed in contact by telegraph.

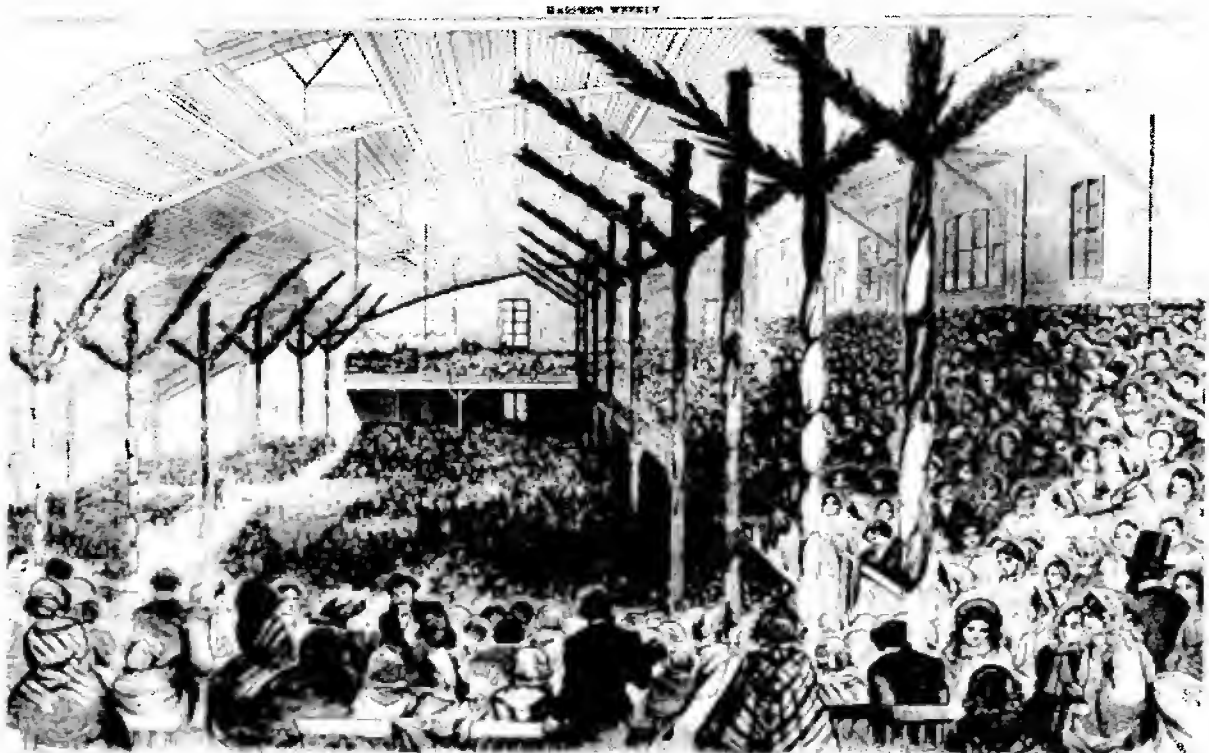
Lincoln supporters, however, had a plan for electing their presidential candidate. As related by Sautter and Burke, several thousand Seward supporters from New York arrived at the convention full of the confidence of coming victory. With them was a gorgeously uniformed brass band that marched about the streets with military precision to the admiration of the populace. On the morning of the day upon which the convention was to meet, the Seward marching band provided a grand parade. While they were in the streets, Lincoln managers filled the Wigwam with Lincoln "shouters." The Seward men were so occupied with marching and countermarching under the stimulating influence of popular applause that by the time they reached the Wigwam, they found that very few except members of the New York delegation could get in. Once inside, the delegates found a packed house strongly in support of the local favorite. The pro-Lincoln block thwarted Seward's nomination on the first ballot, and began gaining additional support from other states. Lincoln was eventually nominated on the third ballot. According to Sautter and Burke, "the convention had in the madness of the moment nominated the darkest horse in American political history."



Above: On May 1, 1861, soon after the capture of Fort Sumter by the Confederates and Lincoln's declaration of war, the Wigwam held a massive rally at which Stephen Douglas, the leader of the northern branch of the Democratic Party, urged support for the Union.

Left: The convention nominated Illinois lawyer Abraham Lincoln as the Republican candidate for President.

Bottom: The interior of the Wigwam during the Republican National Convention as presented in the May 19, 1860, issue of *Harper's Weekly*.



Throughout the convention, the Wigwam was the focus of national attention. After that, however, the building was largely forgotten outside of Chicago. Throughout the summer and fall of 1860, it was the site of many Republican rallies and was occasionally used for other gatherings until its last great day. On April 13, 1861, word reached Washington, D.C., that Fort Sumter was under bombardment. The next day the capitulation of the South Carolina fort to Confederate forces was reported. President Lincoln's proclamation calling for a blockade of southern ports and the use of Union troops in the southern states signaled the beginning of the Civil War. That evening, Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln's longtime rival and now leader of the northern Democrats, talked to the President, vowing his support to preserve the Union. The next day Douglas left Washington for Illinois, where he enjoyed huge support, and held rallies pleading for the preservation of the Union. On May 1 he reached Chicago, where 10,000 people were gathered at the Wigwam. Douglas urged his followers to stand by the Union. It was his last public appearance; he died in Chicago on June 3 (the Stephen A. Douglas Tomb was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1977).

On March 30, 1861, before the great Douglas rally, the Wigwam had been auctioned, with the money going to the Home for the Friendless and the Orphan Asylum. There had been no bidders, so the sale was postponed to April 6. At that time, Orrington Lunt, representing the Board of Trustees of the Garrett Biblical Institute which owned the ground on which the building stood, bid on the structure for \$950, nearly three-quarters of which was required to meet the outstanding liabilities of the building. Subsequently, the building was converted to commercial use and rented by merchants Brayton and Young for a market. In 1862 the Wigwam was divided into 10 stores. It is unclear what happened to the building after this. According to some reports, the building may have burned in 1867, after which a block of brick store buildings was built on the site in 1870. Whatever was there in 1871 was certainly destroyed by the great fire.

In 1930, the City erected a 3' by 4' bronze plaque commemorating the old hotel at the site. In 1962 the 100-pound plaque was rededicated, after having been stolen and recovered, and is now housed at City Hall.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Site of the Sauganash Hotel and the Wigwam be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The site of the Sauganash Hotel, built in 1831 by pioneer Mark Beaubien, represents Chicago's position as a gateway to the American Northwest and its rise to prominence as a city in the early 1800s, represented by the election of the first village board in 1833.
- The Wigwam, constructed on the site of the destroyed Sauganash Hotel, was home to the 1860 Republican National Convention which nominated Abraham Lincoln as a candidate for president, signaling the party's commitment to the abolition of slavery and the preservation of the Union. Lincoln's nomination and subsequent election set in motion a series of events that ultimately led the country into the Civil War.
- The selection of Chicago as the site of the convention signaled the rising importance of the City in national politics and also signaled the beginning of one of the more remarkable trends in the United States' political history—since 1860, Chicago has hosted 25 national conventions, more than double the number hosted by any other city.

Criterion 2: Significant Historic Event

Its location as a site of a significant historic event which may or may not have taken place within or involved the use of any existing improvements.

- The land upon which the Sauganash Hotel stood is important in the early history of the City of Chicago as the site of the election of the first village board on August 10, 1833, and Chicago's subsequent incorporation the same year. Meetings were held there until the first courthouse was constructed two years later.
- The Wigwam, built on the same site in 1860, housed the 1860 Republican National Convention, the first national presidential convention held in Chicago and the convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln for president on May 18, 1860.

Criterion 3: Significant Person

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Mark Beaubien, proprietor of the Sauganash Hotel and an early settler in Chicago, was significant in the commercial and political growth of the city. Throughout Chicago's formative decade of the 1830s, Beaubien hosted city government meetings, and in August 1833 he was one of the "Qualified Electors" who voted in

the first town election. In addition, Beaubien became the first licensed ferry owner in 1834 and was lighthouse keeper in Chicago in 1859 and 1860. Beaubien Court (in the vicinity of Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive) was named after Mark and his older brother, Jean Beaubien.

- Abraham Lincoln's nomination for the presidency at the 1860 Republican National Convention at the Wigwam in Chicago set the stage for his election as president of the United States later that year.
- Abraham Lincoln's nomination and election to the presidency provided the impetus for the secession of several southern states from the Union and eventually for the Civil War.
- Abraham Lincoln's well-documented skills, leadership, dedication to the concept of freedom for all Americans regardless of race, and unwavering commitment to the solidarity of the nation successfully led the United States through its bloodiest period and provided generations of future Americans with perhaps the country's most idealized and respected leader.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

The Chicago Landmarks Ordinance allows designation of sites of importance to Chicago history even when no buildings or other "improvements" from the period of significance survive. Although nothing remains of the Sauganash Hotel or the Wigwam, the location of the site at the southeast corner of Lake Street and Wacker Drive, on the south bank of the Chicago River, still conveys its association with these important events in the city's early history.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a structure is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Neither the Sauganash Hotel nor the Wigwam have survived, nor is there archaeological evidence of them remaining. The current building and other improvements located on the site are not significant features for this designation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CITY OF CHICAGO

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Illustrations

From Mayer and Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis*, p. 2, bottom

From Andreas, *History of Chicago*, Vol. 1, p. 4, top

From Meyers and Wade, *Early Chicago*, p. 4, bottom left

From Hogan and Wendt, *Chicago: A Pictorial History*, p. 4, bottom right

From A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago*, p. 7

From Hogan and Wendt, *Chicago: A Pictorial History*, p. 10, top left

From Hogan and Wendt, *Chicago: A Pictorial History*, p. 10, top right

From *Harper's Weekly*, May 19, 1860, p. 10, bottom

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone: (312-744-2958) TTY: (312-744-9140) fax; web site: <http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>.

This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.